

GREAT MEADOWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
MONTHLY NARRATIVE: AUGUST 1993

A. HIGHLIGHTS

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Weather conditions in August were near normal. Temperatures were relatively comfortable with the exception of one week near the end of the month which hovered in the 90's. Precipitation amounts were also near normal at 4.06 inches. This reverses a dry trend which began in May. The rainfall did not help much to relieve the dry conditions in the floodplain or in the Concord impoundments, but at least we did not record another deficit month.

D. PLANNING

6. Other

E. ADMINISTRATION

1. Personnel
8/3 RM Moses

8/4-6 Cristal Cutler, R.O. Refuges and Wildlife, visited the refuge to assist with various budget and admin. functions including reconciliation of Denver printouts.

Numerous E.O.Y. functions were implemented toward the end of August. Regional control desk went into effect on August 24.

8/2 Transfer of property was effected with Parker River for the GMC dump truck and the Felling trailer. New credit cards were also issued and received for the equipment.

8/3 Specifications and prices to procure an Aquatic weed harvesting machine were compiled and mailed to volunteer Gerry Tolman. Gerry has "volunteered" to assist the station and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with solicitation for private donations to meet the Challenge Grant requirements and raise the remaining \$50,000.

8/5 R.O.S. Frisque met with Wayland Officer, Frank McKenzie-Lamb as well as other local town officials concerning an illegal dumping situation at the Route 20 bridge. The perpetrator was also present at the meeting. A schedule of clean up was agreed upon by the Town

and the illegal dumper. Possible legal action was also discussed concerning this situation.

8/9-20 R.O.S. Ware attended the FWS two week add-on law enforcement session at FLETC in August.

8/20 An unannounced imprest audit was conducted at GRM by BF Staff, Stephanie Sheehan. This was the third audit since June!!!

8/20 R.O.S. Frisque updated and mailed the End of the Year Accomplishment report to Curt Laffin.

8/23 A drug (marijuana) surveillance flight was conducted. The flight included both the Sudbury and Concord units of the refuge as well as the Sudbury Annex. A small plot was found and marked on the Annex.

8/24 Two members of the Camp Curtis Guild National Guard accompanied Sudbury Det. John Harris and Lt. Ron Nix and Manager Moses as well as R.O.S. Frisque to the marijuana site. Twenty (20) plants were pulled and stored at the Sudbury Police Station for later destruction.

8/31 Station YEA's were mailed to the R.O.

8/31 Station wells and water system were inspected by Mass. DEP, James Dillon.

Coop. Ed. Student Dena Donaldson notified us that her graduation date had been delayed until December, and that she would not be returning to Great Meadows until January, 1994 to begin her full year. R-5 personnel is forwarding an SF-50 to the Washington office for approval of an extension of Leave Without Pay status (in excess of one year). Dena has experienced several delays in graduation while she completes her coursework.

3. Other Manpower Programs

ORP Kennedy met with Leslie Schuler, a representative of the Student Conservation Association on August 13 to discuss the SCA program and its potential at Great Meadows.

4. Volunteer Program

Ongoing Volunteer activities include trail patrol and maintenance, and fish tank maintenance. On August 18 Volunteer Barbara Howell tended the Visitor Center so the staff could attend Defensive Driving training at Nashua. Late in the month, ORP Kennedy was contacted by Babson College regarding a volunteer project for their Graduate Students. A group of 50 students will volunteer on September 11 at the Concord and Sudbury Units of Great Meadows.

Volunteer Jon Varteresian made two visits to Great Meadows to

attempt to repair the failing ORP computer. He was not successful and the computer disintegrated on August 10.

6. Safety

In response to an increase in rabies incidents in the region, rabies safety fliers were posted at the Concord Unit and Weir Hill bulletin boards on August 13.

All station fire extinguishers were inspected for proper charge.

Refuge staff completed Defensive Driving training at Nashua NFH on August 18, and CPR at Great Meadows on August 27. ORP Matt Poole, from Nashua NFH, instructed both classes.

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

2. Wetlands

Water levels in the floodplain of the Sudbury and Concord rivers remained at very low levels throughout August. Some rise was evident towards the end of the month but was significant enough to provide much improved habitat for waterfowl. Likewise water levels in the Concord impoundments remained very low. As much as 7-8 ft. of shoreline is exposed around much of the lower impoundment.

G. WILDLIFE

2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

An upland sandpiper was observed by volunteer Barbara Howell near the refuge.

3. Waterfowl

Waterfowl numbers began to slowly increase through the month as local birds and a few early migrants began to concentrate on the few inundated marsh units on the refuge. Flooded beaver flowages near the Strand property recorded 200+ wood ducks and other waterfowl using these areas as roosting sites.

Banding efforts in August were productive. Floating traps were placed and baited beginning on the 4th. Actual banding began on the 16th. A total of 32 wood ducks and 3 mallards were banded in August. In addition Bio. Tech., Burke accompanied the Mass. Div. of Fish and Wildlife with night airboat banding on the refuge impoundments which yielded another 86 wood ducks and 2 mallards. Two Sora rails and a Virginia rail were also captured and banded during this night banding operation. Other Mass. night banding operations on the Sudbury and Concord rivers in August produced 51

wood ducks, 29 mallards and 1 black duck. Totals, 159 wood ducks, 34 mallards and 1 black duck.

4. Marsh and Waterbirds

Great egrets were observed in the Concord impoundments in August. As many as fourteen individuals were recorded at one time. A common gallinule frequented one of the floating traps and an American bittern was observed on the refuge near Pantry Brook.

The low water levels at the Concord impoundments provided habitat for shorebirds with lesser yellowlegs, least sandpipers, and sanderlings present at various times.

6. Raptors

Redtailed hawks, screech owls, and great horned owls were observed and/or heard at various locations on the refuge. An osprey was observed at the Concord impoundments on the 26th.

10. Other Resident Wildlife

Several woodcock were observed at the Strand property late in August. Nighthawks also began to migrate into the refuge in increasing numbers.

H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

One meeting of 10 people was held in the Auditorium in August. Cases of refuge leaflets were distributed to Minute Man NHP and Concord Chamber of Commerce.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

One group of 40 children and leaders participated in outdoor classroom activities in August. ORP Kennedy met with the group leader prior to the visit to help her plan her group's activities.

4. Interpretive Foot Trails

Eight free standing interpretive panels describing plant and animal species were installed along the Dike Trail and Edge Trail at the Concord Unit of Great Meadows. Now these panels now help to interpret trails at Great Meadows, Oxbow, and Monomoy Refuges.

Information signs describing the handicap accessible bridges made of recycled materials were purchased and installed at both bridges along the Dike Trail at the Concord Unit.

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

Two interpretive panels were received from Wilderness Graphics, each with an error. The semi-custom NWR System panel for John Hay failed to show John Hay NWR on the map. The custom orientation panel for Monomoy has a text error which, though printed on the blueline, was missed by the refuge staff who reviewed it.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

ORP Kennedy met with SVT Director Steve Johnson on August 13 regarding a Native American event they will hold at Great Meadows on October 2.

11. Wildlife Observation

17. Law Enforcement

ROS Frisque met with Wayland Police and a violator who had dumped refuse near the river on August 5. The violator received information about violations of refuge regulations and was warned about dumping in the future.

18. Cooperating Associations

New T shirts with the 1993-94 Duck Stamp design were ordered. New 1994 NWR Calendars were received. Christal Cutler will be an agent in the RO for the SuAsCo Great Meadows bookstore, making calendars and T shirts available for purchase by the staff. This was very successful last year, and another good year is expected.

I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

8. Other

The ORP computer expired after a lengthy illness.

Refuge staff completed installation of a canoe launch at Oxbow NWR in early August. The installation included removal of a large section of 12in. thick concrete, spreading trap rock, and reseeded of the area. The parking itself was also re-surfaced as was a 30ft. section of the entrance road.

R.O.S. Frisque escorted two bidders through the solar system to review additional work which needs to be performed on the unit. Work includes installation of emergency shut off switches at the blower motors, two pole circuit breakers and an outlet in the collector room.

Mowing was completed at a small field near Rices Barn. Some additional mowing was initiated at the Concord unit around the log cabin and boat house, and the dike was mowed again. Mowing was completed at Weir Hill to facilitate helicopter operations and wood chip storage.

Fourteen foot oak side boards were cut and installed on the Mack truck in August.

Two garden carts were repaired and made ready for the volunteer group in September.